



Homeland Security Department Created; Director Named

Following the Council's approval of legislation I submitted creating a Department of Homeland Security, I have chosen Gordon Aoyagi to head the new agency.

As Montgomery County's current Fire Administrator, he is already well versed in our emergency preparedness and response capabilities and has a clear understanding of what it takes to remain vigilant in the face of potential dangers. Gordon is an excellent manager, and I'm confident that he will use every available resource to prevent terrorism and protect our residents from harm.

The new Department of Homeland Security will begin operations on January 1, when the legislation becomes effective. Montgomery County is one of only a handful of counties in the nation to have an agency devoted solely to the protection of our homeland.

New Fire Chief and Transportation Director Named

I'm also pleased to announce the recent appointment of two key positions in County government -- Thomas W. Carr as Fire Chief and Arthur Holmes, Jr. as Director of the Department of Public Works and Transportation.

Tom Carr's experience in the Fire and rescue Service spans more than three decades. For the past year, he served as chief of the Division of Fire and rescue Services. He also served as assistant chief of Operations and Special Projects, District Chief, Station Commander, Emergency Medical Services Officer, 911 Dispatcher and Paramedic/Firefighter.

In his new position, which will become effective January 1, 2005, Tom will have full authority over all fire, rescue and emergency medical services in the County.

Art is a retired U.S. Army Major General who has served as director of our Go Montgomery! program for the past two years. He also served seven years on the Montgomery County Planning Board as commissioner, vice-chair and chairman.

I delighted with both selections. They are well-suited for their new roles and both are very familiar with our community.

Montgomery Named Greenest County

Our recent purchase of wind power from the Mountaineer Wind Energy Center in West Virginia has earned Montgomery County the designation of "Greenest County in Maryland" by Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture).

The County was the only organization outside of Pennsylvania to be recognized at the recent 5th Annual Green Power: Turn It On! Awards Luncheon held in Philadelphia.

This is a great honor for Montgomery County and it represents a significant environmental achievement.

Our purchase of wind energy was the largest in the country among local governments, and represented the fifth largest retail wind power purchaser in the nation. In addition to Montgomery County, the agreement was negotiated on behalf of Prince George's County, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the County's Housing Opportunities Commission, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and 11 municipal governments.

New Community Recreation Center Opens

Doug Duncan in Damascus Recreation Center I was pleased to have been invited to participate in the recent grand opening ceremony for the Damascus Community Recreation Center.

The new, 23,500 square-foot center is located on a 38-acre site at 25520 Oak Drive next to Baker Elementary School. It is the first recreational complex in the county to include athletic fields -- a baseball and a softball field, both with overlapping soccer fields. The center also has a multipurpose asphalt court, a terrace and a playground. Among the indoor amenities are a gym, social hall, exercise room, conference room, game room and an arts and crafts room with pottery kilns.

The Damascus Center is one of four community centers serving the fast-growing Upcounty portion of the county, and I know it will become a centerpiece for the area in which it is located.

Montgomery Recognized as a Best Workplace for Commuters

We have made a commitment -- through our Go Montgomery! program -- to reduce traffic congestion by increasing funding for transit, roads, hiker-biker trails and pedestrian safety. That's why I'm especially pleased to announce that Montgomery County



Doug Duncan Reports

News About Montgomery County, Maryland

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has been acknowledged as one of the "Best Workplaces for Commuters"

(BWC) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Because we're also doing great things to assist local businesses and their employees in setting up successful Commuter Services programs to help reduce traffic congestion, I'm proud to report that 80 new companies on the list of Best Workplaces for Commuters are here in Montgomery County.

Our four Transportation Management Districts (TMDs) -- in Friendship Heights, Bethesda, North Bethesda and right here in Silver Spring -- concentrate transit services, business and commuter outreach, and education in these most urbanized areas of the county.

In fact, I'm also proud to announce that our Silver Spring TMD won the 2004 Commuter's Cup, given to the TMD that enrolls the highest proportion of best workplace organizations and employees in the metro region.

Obviously our investment, to date, in reducing traffic congestion is paying dividends and I am committed to continuing to work to help reduce traffic congestion by exploring new and enhancing existing commuter options.

Teenage Auto Fatalities

In the wake of an ever increasing number of teenage fatalities from automobile accidents over the past weeks -- including five in Montgomery County in just one weekend -- I urge everyone who has a teenager of driving age in their lives to take the message of these devastating losses to heart and work with the schools, police, our lawmakers and the community to ensure that our young drivers will live to realize their full potentials.

I also hope the tragedies will send a clear message to our lawmakers in Annapolis that the time has come to support legislation (proposed last year by Delegates Bill Bronrott and Adrienne Mandel) to close the gap in Maryland's Graduated Driving License Law to restrict many non-family teens from riding with a provisional driver for the first six months that they have their license.

Highway crashes are the number one threat to the lives of our teenagers, and I urge County residents to join me in Annapolis to fight for passage of this law that could help save lives.

Stopping Underage Drinking

I'm proud to announce that the County's departments of Liquor Control and Police have just launched a two-year public education campaign to inform parents and other adults about the legal ramifications and health and safety risks of serving alcohol to anyone under the age of 21.

Entitled "Parents Who Host Lose the Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking," the campaign features a flyer containing tips for parents whose teenagers may either be planning or attending a party. Flyers will be distributed through County liquor stores to anyone buying alcohol.

Other agencies participating in the program are Drawing the Line on Underage Drinking, the Department of Recreation, Montgomery County Public Schools, the County's Highway Safety Office and MADD.

Conference Center Opens

Our new, state-of-the art Bethesda North Hotel and Conference Center on Marinelli Road is open, and I was privileged to be able to welcome the first group that met there -- the Oracle corporation -- and to show off this dazzling new facility.

In addition to having the third largest ballroom in the Washington/Baltimore Metro area, the center has more than 35,000 square feet of meeting space and 21 meeting rooms, including a 130-seat amphitheater. All in all, the meeting facilities will accommodate anywhere from 200 to 1,600 people and receptions for more than 1,800. It's conveniently located by the White Flint Metro, with easy driving access to the Beltway and I-270, and all area airports. The exciting new Music Center at Strathmore is a short distance down Rockville Pike and in the area surrounding the Center are more than 200 restaurants and White Flint Mall.

I'm also pleased to report that several months before it opened, it had already booked more than \$1.6 million in business. The County's Department of Economic Development owns the Conference Center and Quadrangle Development Corporation owns 225-room hotel. Both the hotel and conference center will be managed by Marriott.